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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, November 18, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WINTER SPORTS IN THE NATIONAL FORESTS." Information from the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Listeners, how would you like an adventure tomorrow? Or if not precisely tomorrow, as soon as there's a good heavy snowfall in your part of the country. People in the northern tier of States have had some snow already, and for Thanksgiving Day some of them are planning to go.....

There, I'm getting ahead of myself. The big adventure is for all who are not too timid or too fragile to get out in the snow and enjoy themselves. So come down to the station early in the morning, and we'll go aboard the "mystery train." You've heard of these mystery trains, haven't you? Or maybe they call them snow trains where you live.

Of course you'll bring your own special play accessories for the day -- skis, snowshoes or skates -- whatever you expect to use. The right attire is a warm skiing outfit, complete with scarf, thick gloves, and stick-tight knitted or leather headgear. Perhaps you expect to do some dog-sledding or tobogganing. For these sports the manager of the trip has probably provided the necessary equipment on the spot.

Why mystery trains? Just because it adds to the fun not to know the exact destination. And because the trip managers can't tell very long in advance where the snow on the mountains will be at its best on the scheduled day. It's pretty safe to assume that the train will head for one of our National Forests, if you live within two or three hours' ride of a suitable forest area.

All aboard now, listeners! Young, and not-so-young will be with us. If you think skiing is chiefly a sport for the college-age group -- just notice those tots up front with miniature skis on which they can practice till they can ski "just like daddy." And there's a man who says this is his sixtieth birthday celebration. He's an Englishman, and he learned to ski -- or she, as he calls it -- in Switzerland.

While we're on our way I can tell you something about how the U. S. Forest Service is meeting the widespread demand for winter sports facilities. You'll find them in practically all the National Forests that have the necessary combination of mountainside, valley, and heavy snowfall. They are part of the general recreational use of the National Forests.

As in the case of summer use of the forests, their increased winter activity has been made possible by the opening up of many new roads. In winter some of the roads are now kept plowed and sanded so as to make snow-covered slopes more accessible. Again, the Forest Service has seen to it that ski trails are cleared, parking areas provided, and warming shelters with sanitary facilities set up. In some of the National Forests, because of the long distance the enthusiasts travel on Saturday afternoons, it has been necessary to make some provision for their spending the night in small warming houses.

During the past five or six years interest in winter sports has grown by leaps and bounds. Just what has given it such an impetus would be hard to say. Possibly the prominent displays of winter sportswear and accessories by commercial concerns has had something to do with it, as well as the opening up of the roads. Last year, the Bureau of Public Roads built more than 300 miles of highways in National Forests and National Parks. Many more miles or roads and trails were constructed by CCC and WPA labor.

The outstanding National Forest for winter sports in the East is the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire. Vermonters also ski and snowshoe extensively along the slopes of the Green Mountains when they are wearing their white coverlet. Most of the Green Mountain range lies in a National Forest. Last year the Nicolet National Forest of Wisconsin opened a large recreational area for winter sports use. Other large and popular winter sports developments are in the Pike and Roosevelt Forests in Colorado, Sawtooth National Forest surrounding Ketchum in Idaho, Mount Hood in Oregon, Mount Baker, Olympic, and Snoqualmie in Washington, and the Tahoe, Eldorado, and Angeles National Forests in California. Even the National Forests of New Mexico have regions sufficiently high for snow sports. Although National Forests receiving the most extensive use are located near large cities, it is reported that dozens of smaller towns throughout the northern Rockies and Pacific Coast region have cooperated with the Forest Service to fix up individual areas for their own winter sports.

So far skiing has been the principal attraction. But snowshoeing along isolated forest trails is gaining followers. Many of the summer trails used by forest rangers and hikers are available, and special snowshoe trails are frequently marked for the winter sportsman. Skating is possible on a number of National Forests. Dog sledding is increasing in popularity. Toboganning has become one of the chief sports and in some of the western forests, these long sleds shoot at high speed past tall pines on toboggan slides constructed of heavy timbers.

The present recreational program of the Forest Service includes many increased facilities for winter sports enthusiasts. Additional warming shelters and facilities for warming coffee and cooking meals are planned on many of the National Forests. In some cases more elaborate warming structures and accommodations are considered necessary, such as the new Timberline Lodge on the Mount Hood Forest, or the warming house just below the bowl of Tuckerman Ravine in the White Mountain National Forest.

The Forest Service officers say that on week-ends the parking problem is just as acute in some of these winter sports areas as in the most congested cities. Parking places have to be plowed for hundreds of automobiles, especially when important tournaments attract many spectators as well as participants.

The Federal foresters explain that the object of improving winter sports areas in the National Forests is to provide recreation for the general public, for the amateur sportsmen and for everyday people, rather than for the experts. The construction of ski jumps for professional use is not contemplated, although in some of the National Forests, sites have been made available under permit to ski clubs or organizations, for the construction of such facilities. In several Forests, such as the Superior in Minnesota, natural jumps are available. Tuckerman Ravine in the White Mountain Forest provides an excellent site where championship slalom and downhill races are held.

Well, friends, here we are. The "mystery train" is slowing down at (Name of nearest National Forest winter sports area) _____ and our fun has begun. Pile out, everybody!